

Character and Characterization in Gibran Khalil Gibran's *Al-'Awāsif* Short Story Collection

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Extended Abstract

1- Introduction

Character is one of the most basic narrative fundamentals in each story, and it plays a significant role in developing the plot and unfolding of the events. Gibran's *Al-'Awāsif* involves a series of short stories, in which the author has assigned significant importance to characters and means of developing them. In this book, Gibran has been very concerned with the element of character and the methods of characterization. The present article focuses on character in *Al-'Awāsif*, given the effective role of this element in shaping the events and developing the plot of the story.

2- Theoretical Framework

For the research to have a methodological structure, this section sets to briefly introduce the study key terms and elaborate on their practical use in the text. It can be stated that characters of a story are, in fact, an objective image of behaviors, features, and habits of those who are formed via a logical cycle in the author's mind by the modeling of external realities and the author's surroundings. The most renowned categorization of different characters is presented by Morgan Forster. In his categorization, Forster distinguishes between “round” and “flat” characters. From his viewpoint, a flat character, in its best, is built upon a united quality or idea and could be expressed in a single sentence. However, there are further dimensions to a “round” character (Forster, 2005). A “static” character remains the same from the beginning until the end of a story (Doubtfire, 2009), yet a “dynamic” character gradually changes throughout a story and is influenced by the course of events (Najm, 1963). Two methods have been suggested for characterization:

a) Direct description of personal traits: in this method, the personal qualities, states, activities, and behaviors are presented, and the goal is to induce an image of the character (Mirsadeghi, 2009). Direct characterization involves the simultaneous

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or separate presentation of two personality aspects of a character. One aspect is the character's appearance and the other is his/her internal qualities such as moods, emotions, feelings, and thoughts (Najm, 1963).

b) Indirect Description: in this method, authors develop their characters gradually through conversations, deeds, behaviors, actions, and thoughts (Zeituni, 2002).

3- Method

This is a descriptive-analytical research. First, the definition and significance of character in the world is explained, and then, within the body of the research, some theoretical backgrounds are provided in each section, followed by the analysis of the examples.

4- Results and Discussion

The minor characters in almost all of the stories are flat and have only one type of behavior.

In those stories of *Al-'Awāsif* with a third person point of view, there is usually not more than one round character while the other characters are flat and one-dimensional. Basically, there is no round character in the stories recounted by a third-person narrator. All minor characters in *Al-'Awāsif* are static since they do not change significantly over the course of the stories.

Some of the main characters of this collection are dynamic. They are affected and turned by the events, which set the stage for a range of spiritual, behavioral, and sociological changes in them. The static characters of the stories are more frequent than the dynamic ones. The reason should be sought in the limitations of characterization instruments, which is itself because of the "compression and concision of short stories" (Almomeni, 2009, p. 32). In developing his characters, Gibran is not just concerned with physical characteristics, but he is also engaged in describing the characters' inner aspects, and tries to show the feelings of sadness and joy, love and hatred, rancor and jealousy, etc., by using different means.

5- Conclusion

The characters and characterization in these stories are closely linked to the type of narrative or point of view. In the stories with first-person point of view, the range of characters is limited, and the stories are comprised of two characters. However, in the stories with third-person point of view, there is a greater variety of characters. Since the lack of time in short stories may prevent the proper development of characters, writers could use a combination of story description, dialogue, and action with more emphasis on dialogue.

In *Al-'Awāsif*, the focus has been more on the reality of characters.

Keywords: *Al-'Awāsif*, Gibran Khalil Gibran, Character, Characterization, Short story.

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